# Lesson 1: Understanding the Key Concepts

## Find out how this after-school program helps kids stay in school.

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Keeping children awake in class is one thing. Keeping them in school is another. Citizen Schools has developed a nationwide after-school program aimed at keeping students in school so they can achieve more in their future jobs and in life.

To complete this feat, the program prescribes four essentials to learning: community support, leadership and positive values, access to resources, and new basic skills. These academic and real-life principles set the tone for the rest of the curriculum.

## Community

Providing students with a community gives them resources and a sense of relevance. Citizen Schools embeds students in the community by making citizens active participants, or mentors, in the education process.

Mentors are the hallmark of the program. Mentors create a vital link between community, students, and parents. They encourage parents to become more involved in their kids' education; connect parents, teachers, and after-school staff; and entice young people to contribute directly to community improvement.

## Leadership and Positive Values

Leadership and positive values help kids obtain self-respect. You can build leadership skills by helping students plan ahead, lead groups, be effective team members, resolve conflicts, be self-aware, and take positive risks.

## Access

Access to diverse role models and professional pathways enlightens and enriches student knowledge. Students need access to the best resources their community has to offer—educationally, culturally, and financially. You can help children become familiar with resources in their community by having them visit colleges and museums, introducing them to professionals and tradespeople, and allowing them to share opinions with political leaders.

## New Basic Skills

Technology and other forces of the twenty-first century have spawned a new set of basic skills. Recent research indicates that young adults who develop these new basic skills earn higher incomes. In *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, authors Richard Murnane and Frank Levy define these skills (at right):

Try to incorporate at least two of these skills in your lesson plans, by using the chart on the following page, assessing student's progress in mastering each skill along the way.

### NEW BASIC SKILLS

» **Oral communication**
The ability to speak to an audience with confidence, making eye contact and using proper body language.

» **Written communication**
The ability to use new vocabulary, communicate effectively in writing, and read critically.

» **Data analysis**
The ability to solve problems by looking at the data.

» **Technological adaptability**
The ability to use technology as a tool.

» **Teamwork**
The ability to work effectively and solve problems as part of a diverse team.

| New Skill | Definition | Assessing the Skill |
|---|---|---|
| **ORAL PRESENTATION** | The ability to speak coherently and confidently to groups, using appropriate eye contact and body language. | **Students are able to:** » Develop a well-organized written presentation in preparation for their oral presentation. » Speak loudly, slowly, and clearly enough for the audience to understand. » Present information using eye contact and good body posture. » Effectively use visual aids in a presentation. |
| **TEAMWORK** | The ability to work in groups, to encourage others, and to give and receive feedback. | **Students are able to:** » Build on other apprentices' ideas during discussions. » Contribute to group work or discussions while sharing the spotlight. » Ask questions that deepen their understanding of other people's perspectives. » Give and receive constructive feedback. |
| **LEADERSHIP** | The ability to make decisions and establish goals, and the willingness to volunteer to help other students. The student is a role model because he or she focuses and completes work, follows directions, and guides others. | **Students are able to:** » Speak confidently in front of an audience. » Take the initiative to get information and resources in order to accomplish tasks or to solve a problem. » Set achievable goals and track their progress in achieving them. » Articulate verbally or in writing how the lesson is connected to the larger community. |
| **DATA ANALYSIS** | The ability to test hypotheses, use data (qualitative and quantitative), draw conclusions from the data, and interpret and communicate data. | **Students are able to:** » Analyze data and create a bar graph or pie chart accurately. » Ask a clear question and form a hypothesis that connects to it. » Draw concrete conclusions from data sets. » Identify and use data in their everyday life. » Develop and use survey questions to collect valid data. |
| **TECHNOLOGY** | The ability to identify and use technological tools. | **Students are able to:** » Correctly identify the uses of specific technological instruments and tools. » Identify the specific roles of technology in society. » Use technology as part of problem solving. |
| **ADVANCED LITERACY (READING AND WRITING)** | The ability to use new vocabulary, communicate effectively in a written manner, and make inferences when reading. | **Students are able to:** » Independently develop and think through the main idea of a written piece. » Consistently write paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting ideas. » Identify the main idea of something they've read. » apply terms and vocabulary associated with their apprenticeship correctly. |